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German in Rome Denies He Knowingly Helped Fleeing Nazis

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Special to The New York Times

ROME, Feb. 22 — A German physician mentioned in a 1947 report to the State Department as a smuggler of Nazis out of Italy under the protection of the Vatican has denied that he knowingly aided Nazis and said he had actively opposed them and had been imprisoned and mistreated by them.

The physician, Dr. Willi Nix, also said he had been in constant contact with a United States intelligence agent during his work in issuing identity cards to Germans who had none.

"I can still show you the scars from the beatings I received during two years in concentration camps," Dr. Nix said. "How ridiculous to say that I would give legitimacy in any form to Nazis!"

He said he had no idea why the charges had been made by the author of the State Department report, Vincent La Vista, who looked into the illegal movement of refugees in Europe during the postwar period.

State Dept. Made Report Public

The State Department made his report public after The New York Times on Jan. 26 published an article that was based in part on the La Vista report.

Since then new evidence has emerged in New York indicating that Mr. La Vista may not have been aware that some of the people he was investigating were in fact working with United States intelligence authorities.

In Rome, independent sources have made available official American documents describing Dr. Nix, who headed the German Anti-Nazi Associa-

tion here after the liberation of Rome in 1944, as a man "of unquestioned anti-Nazi record" who was cooperating with Allied intelligence.

West Germany has recognized Dr. Nix as a victim of Nazi persecution and is paying him restitution in the form of a pension. Hundreds of thousands of people who suffered under the Nazis are receiving such restitution.

A report on Dr. Nix prepared on April 9, 1945, by the headquarters of the 426th Counter-Intelligence Detachment in Rome and signed by Daniel A. Leahy, special agent, said Dr. Nix "upon request of C.I.C. has allowed suspicious German nationals in the Rome area to enter into the activities of his group so that closer surveillance and control could be exercised over them and their political security appraised."

Nix Remembers American Agent

Dr. Nix, who has no knowledge of the Leahy report, recalled Mr. Leahy as the agent with whom he was in contact while he headed the office that, under Allied and Italian supervision, provided identity cards to Germans who lived in Rome or had drifted here after the liberation.

Dr. Nix, 77 years old, has been living here since arriving as a refugee in 1938. He said he was imprisoned in Germany from 1935 to 1937, first in the Esterwegen and later in the Oranienburg-Sachsenhausen concentration camps for anti-Nazi activities among Roman Catholic students. He was stripped of his German citizenship in 1940 and it was restored in 1963.

His association was set up after the liberation as a grouping of about 250

German anti-Nazis who had lived in the somewhat more tolerant atmosphere of Fascist Italy.

When hundreds of other Germans — defectors or civilian residents of Italy or refugees from neighboring countries — began to arrive, the Allied authorities gave the Anti-Nazi Association, the task of interrogating the Germans and recommending whether they should be given identity cards and allowed to live freely pending repatriation or be interned as Nazi suspects.

Work Continued Until 1947

Dr. Nix said his group received no money, but staff members were given food rations and collected small fees for the issuing of documents. This work continued until the Italian peace treaty was signed in February 1947, and Italy assumed control over aliens within its territory.

The following December, Dr. Nix was assigned as a physician to an internment camp for Germans near Rome and was told that he was considered an undesirable alien for reasons that he says were not explained. He was granted legal status as a resident alien six months later, and continues to live and conduct cancer research here.

Dr. Nix said that he would never knowingly have given an identity card or any help to any suspected Nazi. "But neither I nor any one else in the chaos of those days, when Europe was full of people far from their countries and without documents, could have prevented that some one slipped through," he said. He added that to this day he was aware of no such case in his own work.